

LESS IS MORE

Anti-consumerism comment and campaigning



Create your own Abundance

On June 10th, Abundance won the Observer Ethical Award 2010 for best new Grassroots Project. Nicola Scott describes a new nationwide movement designed to share an abundance of free food.

Each year hundreds of fruit trees go unpicked either because people don't notice them, may not be physically able to harvest them, or there may just be too many fruits at one time. Abundance is a team of volunteers who help harvest city fruit and redistribute the surplus to the local community on a non-profit basis. Abundance groups and others which harvest fruit in urban areas have begun in a number of towns and cities in the UK, including Sheffield, Manchester, London, Edinburgh, Bristol, and Leeds (contact details below). Abundance Manchester's recipients include destitute asylum seekers, and a community café.

Why Abundance?

Abundance is a practical solution to the problems of food waste and food security. It shows the potential there is for feeding ourselves in urban areas, and reconnects us with what's growing on our doorsteps. Living in cities or towns can separate us from nature, and each other – Abundance helps to bridge these gaps. Its projects also focus on cutting food miles/carbon footprints by collecting and distributing seasonal and locally-grown fresh produce to local people who need it.

Abundance groups also juice fruit and make jams, chutneys and crumbles which are given away or used to support the project. Work continues through the seasonal cycle with other activities like tree planting. Pruning and grafting 'skill-shares' are also provided by some groups in order to enable local communities to learn how to improve their local fruit tree crop.

Manchester Abundance has created a community allotment plot in a car park to grow and distribute produce. It also collects surplus vegetables from other local allotment holders to redistribute nearby.

It's easy to create your own Abundance

A key to its success is the continued help of local, dedicated volunteers to pick and distribute fruit, plus residents and allotment holders who are willing to donate their surplus produce. Firstly, a few volunteers identify local public spaces or contact residents with private gardens where fruit can be harvested. Publicity to attract fruit donations and more volunteers is put in places such as the local media, local libraries, and local healthfood shops. At the same time, local community groups in need of fresh produce are identified and contacted to ask if they would like to receive produce collected. From August to the end of October regular pickings and distributions are made. Sheffield Abundance has an online handbook to help others set up their own project, whilst Abundance Manchester has put a "Create Your Own Abundance" toolkit on its webpage (see below).

Abundance has already spread across the UK. It requires little funding and works best at a small-scale and local level. It's also a fun way to spend a few hours – climbing trees, picking fruit, plus meeting others interested in food sustainability and social justice issues. Crucially, each Abundance group runs autonomously; tailored to suit the interests and resources of those involved in running the project. The ultimate aim of Abundance is to reach every neighbourhood so that each has their own group to collect and redistribute produce.

Grassroots action for social change

Abundance acts at the grassroots level, whilst addressing environmental and social justice issues across the UK (and beyond). Central to Abundance's philosophy is its voluntary collection and redistribution of sourced fresh produce to those who would otherwise be unable to afford it. Volunteering for Abundance is open to all, regardless of whether you have any previous gardening or tree climbing abilities! Furthermore, the free skill-share events provided by some Abundance groups enable a diverse range of people to learn about the free food sources which surround them, and provide opportunities for participants to develop the confidence to practice these skills.

Abundance Manchester recently read about people that had picked cherries from a tree near a supermarket. They remarked how ironic it was that cherries sold inside the store were costly and from far away, whilst they harvested free, fresh, delicious, and locally grown fruit outside the supermarket's doors.

Abundance shares, rather than profits from our local harvest, and reconnects us with nature, our food, and each other. What's to stop you creating your own Abundance?



Contact Details

Sheffield:

www.growsheffield.com/pages/groShefAbund.html
or phone 0114 258 0784

Manchester:

<http://abundancemanchester.wordpress.com>
or phone 07729 604 862

London Groups:

www.urbanharvest.org.uk or phone 07973 733 239
www.organiclea.org.uk
<http://westalingabundancew13.wordpress.com>

Edinburgh:

www.abundanceedinburgh.com
www.selfsufficientish.com/main/blog.php/2009/02/02/the-fruit-

Bristol:

sharers-bristol-and-beyond

Leeds:

www.leedsurbanharvest.org.uk

